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Agnew Calls for Recognition of 18-Year-Olds as Mature Americans

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 3 — Vice President Agnew sympathized today with what he called the "youth liberation movement" and called for recognition of 18-year-olds as mature Americans.

"I believe the great bulk of our young people to be ready to take on adult burdens at 18," the Vice President told a luncheon gathering of Senators and high school seniors from the 50 states.

Mr. Agnew said history supported his belief that demands by the young today for a larger role in society represent "a desire not for something new but for something old."

Joan of Arc was 17 when she led an army, Alexander Hamilton was 21 when he played a major role in the American Revolution, and William Pitt was 24 when he became Prime Minister, the Vice President said.

He said his research into the tradition of setting the age of maturity at 21 showed that it was traceable to the training of knights in the Middle Ages, when the strength and skill to bear heavy arms took time to acquire. Even then, however, the other classes reached legal majority at 15, Mr. Agnew said.

His remarks today had none of the tone of his 1970 campaign assaults on the youthful minority who resorted to violence to express dissent. And he quoted from the report of the Presidential Commission on Campus Unrest—a report that the Vice President said last September was "sure to be taken as more pablum for the permissivists" — to bolster his argument that Americans should not be categorized by age groups.

Mr. Agnew, who said he was the father of three young adults and one daughter "who is 15, going on 20," made the remarks to 102 high school seniors and most members of the Senate.

The students are participants in an annual youth conference sponsored by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation.